

NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the meeting on July 8, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Pam Knox at 6:34 pm.

- I. ROLL CALL:** Present were Commissioners Pam Knox, Russ Barrett, Christine Barnes, Ruth Ruttenberg, Don Wallace, and Laura Hill-Eubanks. Also attending were Shawn White (Friends of the Winooski River - FOWR) and Laura Ranker (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission - CVRPC).
- II. SET/ADJUST AGENDA:**
- III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (scheduled):**
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** June 10, 2015 minutes approve 5-0-1
- V. DISCUSSION**
 - a. Wellfield Site Plan Maintenance:** Shawn White of FOWR explained a proposal for maintenance of the wellfield riparian tree plantings, originally planted by her organization and local volunteers. The USFWS is providing grant money for maintenance of the trees and the wellfield is a priority site for FOWR. Tree plantings need maintenance to do well. The LANDS program assessed the site and prepared a report, which Shawn will send us. The primary concern is invasives, especially knotweed. A team from the Intervale will be working to clear around the trees this month. After that the invasives should be cleared at least once per month. Volunteers will be needed. Christine volunteered to organize volunteers and a training. Overall however the trees at both the wellfield and the Norwich sites are doing well. Pam will contact the town manager to inform him of the project. Shawn will follow up.
 - b. Northfield Urban Community Forest Program:** VT UCF has asked the CVRPC to assist with writing a municipal tree plan for the towns that have conducted tree inventories under the Care of the Urban Forest Project. Laura Ranker will be working with the NCC on this. A first draft of the plan is due August 15, and the final draft is to be presented to the Select Board. May ask for possible extension of the Aug 15 deadline. NCC will meet with the CVRPC two times. The plan should be 10-15 pages and include goals, operations & budgets, and take recommendations from the inventory report and incorporate into the management plan. Contract deadline is June 2016. After plan is finalized, training will be required to implement the tree management policies; UCF will do the training. Management goals can include protection of older trees, routing infrastructure around valued trees, identifying primary person to oversee management. Could potentially work with other towns for more efficient program. Russ will be the NCC contact for the Plan drafting.

- c. **Tree grant:** NCC has been awarded a \$5000 grant from the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program to conduct a natural resources inventory of the municipal forest. Need to issue RFP for a consultant to do the inventory. Inventory should include natural communities and habitats and wetlands assessments. Erosion is also a concern. Ruth will draft an RFP and Laura will assist.

The grant for posters made by the 4th graders is concluding. A report will be written. Pam will distribute the posters in establishments in town for the public to see.

- d. **Sign Grant:** NCC received \$400 grant from the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions. The funds will be used to begin making signs for the town forest. May start with interpretive/conservation and trail route signs. Laura Ranker stated that a boyscout would be interested in working on the signs for his Eagle Scout project. Can also potentially use \$500 of the VTUCF funds for brochures. NCC will include signage on its Sept 9 agenda.
- e. **Paine MTN hike & meeting with Norwich:** several NCC members hiked Paine Mountain recently to review trails. Looks as though Paine Mountain Trail (PMT) is the main trail and the only real through trail in the town forest. Saw some ponds or wetlands/vernal pool on the hike. Some cutting of trails that looked as though they were used for skiing. Education needed on town forest, ecology, trails, etiquette.

Christine, Russ, and Don met with Dave Magida of Norwich U to discuss the trail system on Paine Mountain, which includes 2 properties: the Norwich Shaw Center multi-use trail system, and the Town Forest trails. Norwich and the town share the s-curves trail in the town's Cheney Field. There is a Shaw Center manager that takes care of seeing to its maintenance, including the trail maintenance. Dave suggested that allowing bikes to go up on the PMT would not be effective, as it would be difficult to prevent bikers from going up and then turning around to go back down the same way; he suggested that the PMT be restricted to hikers only. The only other way down would be to bike from the PMT over to Norwich land, and neither the town forest nor the currently configured Norwich trail system include a trail that would allow for biking down from the top of Paine that way. Signage could help to educate about the uses on town and Norwich land, although there have been some problems with signs being vandalized. Norwich does not currently have a timeline to develop Phase 2 of the trail system.

There was further discussion regarding the potential for the manager of the Shaw Center, and signage, to more effectively direct and educate people as to trail use and etiquette. The Shaw Center will have parking for users. Users can also park at the medical center after hours and on weekends. NCC and Shaw Center could jointly work on signage, educational/etiquette pamphlets, stewardship, sensitive areas, and cultural/historic areas of interest. The meeting was very positive.

- f. **Economic Brownfields Growth group:** Group formed to administer grant for brownfields development. Don is participating. Laura will send Don a link to the report on the natural resources inventory of areas along the Dog River, which was to be used in planning for development. The report is also available at the NCC Facebook page.
- g. **Conservation speaker for Library program:** NCC did not participate this round. Christine will contact Sarah Snow (youth program librarian) to determine conservation topics that NCC could offer support for in the future.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

VII. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Laura Hill-Eubanks, Northfield Conservation Commission.

These minutes are subject to changes and approval at the next regular meeting, but are substantially correct.